

# **COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM**

## **TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM CONFERENCE CALL NOTES**

**January 8, 2003**

**CORPS OF ENGINEERS NORTHWESTERN DIVISION OFFICES – CUSTOM  
HOUSE  
PORTLAND, OREGON**

**TMT Internet Homepage: <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html>**

# **DRAFT**

### **FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS**

Facilitator: Donna Silverberg

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the “record” of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

#### **Chum Flow Alternatives:**

##### *Action Agency Scenarios:*

Tony Norris, BOR, presented information on flow studies being done by the Action Agencies to help with 2003 chum decisions. The four scenarios are:

1. Priority: Meet chum needs – miss Vernita Bar? Miss April 10 refill?
2. Priority: Meet Vernita Bar – dewater chum? Miss April 10 refill?
3. Priority: Meet April 10 refill – dewater chum? Miss Vernita Bar?
4. Priority: Meet chum needs and Vernita Bar – how far is Grand Coulee drafted?  
How are May/June flows affected?

The January final runoff forecast will be used in the models. 125 kcfs will be used for chum criteria. The COE will run a Q adjust run to meet April 10 refill and Vernita Bar. This will be available at the next TMT meeting, January 22. Shane Scott, Washington, will check on chum emergence dates.

##### *Hydro 51 and 52 Studies:*

The Salmon Managers reached consensus that hydro study 52 is not a long term preference because it would change the Biological Opinion priority of the April 10 refill and reduce spring flows too significantly during key steelhead and spring chinook migration and low flow years. During average and high flow years, there is no real affect. Paul Wagner thanked BPA for conducting the analysis.

### **Review Current System Conditions:**

*Fish:* Paul Wagner reported that there were very high numbers of chum spawning in the lower Columbia. The final count will be available at the next TMT meeting.

*Reservoir Operations:* Rudd Turner reported that COE projects are being operated at a minimum discharge. BON is at an elevation 11.3-1.5' operating range due to the end of chum spawning. Tony Norris reported that Libby is operating with VARQ as the minimum elevation. Information on VARQ in Libby forecasts will be posted on the TMT home page.

*Water Supply:* The January early bird forecast showed a below normal forecast for water supply and precipitation. The January final was due out on Jan. 9.

### **Reschedule Process Meeting:**

The January 22 meeting on process has been changed to the afternoon of January 15. Donna Silverberg will send an email out to members with further details.

### **Other:**

At an FPAC meeting, the Salmon Managers determined that they were not comfortable with the tailwater at Bonneville going below 11.5' at this time, but that the issue should be revisited after further field work is done and the location of the chum redds is verified.

### **Next Meeting, January 22:**

Agenda Items:

- Action Agencies Chum Scenarios
- Steve Smith – NMFS Science Center in-stream survival study for 2002
- Chris Perry – University of Idaho study on tagged fish movements
- Harold Opitz – RFC's new forecasting method, STP
- Review Current System Conditions
- Review SOR's
- Develop Recommended Operations

## **Meeting Minutes**

### ***1. Greeting and Introductions***

The January 7 Technical Management Team conference call was chaired by Rudd Turner of the Corps and facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The following is a distillation, not a verbatim transcript, of items discussed at the meeting and actions taken. Anyone with questions or comments about these minutes should call Rudd Turner at 503/808-3935.

### ***2. Chum Flow Alternatives.***

There are two main components to this agenda item, said Scott Bettin -- the biological implications of study alternatives 51 and 52, and a presentation on this year's operation, said Scott Bettin. Tony Norris said the action agencies have been modeling the chum operation in light of the current system forecast; we're studying four different possibilities, he said, to see what the likelihood is that these four outcomes may occur. There are essentially four questions we're going to study for the hydrosystem, to see what we'll get, given the current outlook, Norris said -- the goal is to give the salmon managers some decisions to make, based on what we know now. He characterized the four study alternatives (and their associated key questions) as follows:

- Alternative 1: do not dewater chum. How does this operation impact Vernita Bar or April 10 refill?
- Alternative 2: Vernita Bar is the priority. Does it dewater chum, and where do we end up on April 10 refill?
- Alternative 3: April 10 refill is the priority. Does it dewater chum, and does it impact the Vernita Bar operation?
- Alternative 4: meet chum flows, meet Vernita Bar targets. How far does that draft Grand Coulee, and how does that affect May-June flows at Priest Rapids and McNary?

The January final water supply forecast is due out tomorrow, Norris added, and at that point, we'll start modeling. The assumption, to provide the chum flow, is that we will meet a minimum Bonneville outflow of 125 Kcfs. We'll discuss the outcome of this exercise at the next TMT meeting on January 22, he said.

With respect to the biological impacts of study alternatives 51 and 52, the consensus among the salmon managers, given the type of water year this is shaping up to be, was to maintain April 10 refill as the top priority, said Paul Wagner. Given the condition of the listed stocks and the current water supply forecast, we recommend against Alternatives 52 and 51, he said, because of the anticipated reduction in spring flows.

### ***3. Fish Migration Status.***

Wagner characterized the 2002 Lower Columbia chum migration as "tremendous." The total for tributaries and mainstem was about 30,000 this year, said Shane Scott. David Wills added that, in the tributaries, it was a very good year, although not quite as good as last year, mainly because water levels didn't allow full access to the tributaries. Wills said he will try to have a final peak tributary population count by the next TMT meeting.

### ***4. Reservoir Operations, Power System Status, Water Supply Forecast.***

Turner said all storage projects are on minimum discharge; average outflow at Bonneville was 117 Kcfs. The minimum tailwater elevation at that project is 11.3 feet, with 11.5 feet as the target, given that chum spawning has now officially ended. Average Lower Granite discharge was 19.5 Kcfs yesterday. Dworshak is currently at 1517.9 feet and filling slightly; that project is also on minimum discharge. The Corps plans to

continue that operation through January and possibly through February, he said. Libby is now at elevation 2410.5, and is drafting about a tenth of a foot per day. We're releasing 4 Kcfs, minimum discharge at that project, and plan to hold that through January and possibly through February as well, Turner said. Albeni Falls is at 2055.4 feet, releasing just over 9 Kcfs, he said. Hungry Horse is at 3518 feet and drafting to meet the Columbia Falls minimum, said Norris; the current runoff forecast is 85% of normal for that basin. The Columbia Falls minimum is now 3.484 Kcfs. Norris added that Grand Coulee was at elevation 1288 this morning.

Have the salmon managers discussed the possibility of lowering the Bonneville tailwater elevation, now that chum spawning has officially ended? Bettin asked. We talked about it at yesterday's FPAC meeting, but we're not comfortable with lowering it at this time, Wills replied. Just checking to see if it's still on your radar, Bettin said. The rationale was that, although field crews haven't documented a lot of redds at the highest elevations, flows were high during the latter part of December, and we want to give the benefit of the doubt to chum, added Scott. We're not ready to lower the Bonneville tailwater elevation until we have a bit more forecast information, so that we can assess the likelihood of being able to maintain the current flow level with a bit more confidence, said Wagner. Another participant noted that the current GPS coordinates of the redds aren't detailed enough to say, with any confidence, how many redds would be dewatered if the Bonneville tailwater is lowered; field crews will be working to firm up those GPS coordinates over the coming weeks.

Turner added that, based on the below-average forecast at Libby, there is no difference between the VARQ and normal flood control elevations. Chris Ross said that based on his calculations, the difference is nearly 12 feet. My point was that, due to the below average water supply forecast, from an operational standpoint, whether or not we implement VARQ, it won't change the operation much at Libby, Turner said – the Corps is likely to release minimum discharge from Libby at least through February.

With respect to the power system, Bettin said everything is fine. Moving on to the water supply forecast, Turner said the most recent forecast is 80 MAF at The Dalles, January-July, 75% of average. At Lower Granite, the current April-July forecast is 15.4 MAF, 71% of average; at Grand Coulee, April-July, 50.5 MAF, 80% of average. The most recent Corps forecast shows Dworshak's April-July runoff volume at 1.784 MAF, 67% of normal. Libby's April-September forecast volume is now 5.25 MAF, 79% of normal, according to the River Forecast Center; the Corps is working on its forecast, but I expect our numbers to be very similar, Turner said. Precipitation was running in the 50-60% of normal range in most basins through December 31, he added, although there have been some significant precipitation events since then.

## ***5. Reschedule Process Review Meeting.***

We would like to delay the process review meeting to the afternoon following our February 5 meeting, said Silverberg. At Scott's request, the TMT process review was rescheduled for next Wednesday afternoon, January 15.

#### ***6. Recommended Operations.***

The current tailwater elevation (11.5 soft constraint, 11.3 hard constraint) will continue at Bonneville, Turner said; Dworshak and Libby will continue to release minimum discharge. Wagner noted that, at the next meeting, the NMFS Science Center will provide a presentation on in-stream juvenile fish survival. Turner added that, at that meeting, Chris Perry from the University of Idaho will provide a presentation on adult fish movement. Also at that meeting, Harold Opitz would like to discuss the River Forecast Center's Single Trace Procedure (STP) modeling process that is replacing SSARR, Turner said.

#### ***7. Next TMT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the Technical Management Team (the TMT process review meeting) was set for Wednesday, January 15. The next regularly-scheduled TMT meeting was set for January 22. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.

### **TMT ATTENDANCE LIST January 8, 2002**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Donna Silverberg	Facilitation Team
Rudd Turner	COE
Scott Bettin	BPA
Shane Scott	WDFW
Paul Wagner	NOAA Fisheries
Tony Norris	USBR
Scott Boyd	COE
Cindy Henriksen	COE
Mike O'Bryant	Columbia Basin Bulletin
Steve Pettit	IDFG
David Wills	USFWS
Steven Wallace	PacifiCorp

Chris Ross	NOAA Fisheries
Martin Hatchett	Seattle City Light
Jiong Ji	Avista Energy
Kyle Martin	CRITFC